



# Connecticut Department of Public Health

## Drug Overdose Monthly Report

### Fatal Unintentional Drug Overdose Report

#### Key Findings of Drug Overdose Decedents, 2019 – January 2021

- Current monthly report is based on confirmed fatal drug overdose cases for 2019, 2020 and January 2021. Because of pending cases, statistics may change for 2020 and 2021 as confirmation of cases occurs periodically. Period of analysis includes January 2019 through December 2020.
- For the period of January to December 2020, there were 1,359 confirmed drug overdose deaths and 78 pending cases waiting for toxicology confirmation.
- There were 48 confirmed and 170 pending cases for 2021, as of the middle of January.
- In 2019, there were 1,200 unintentional drug overdose related deaths.
- **New and emerging substances:** Lethal combinations of xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, with fentanyl were identified in 2019. The same combination trends for 2020 drug overdose deaths. In 2020, new emerging substances, Flualprazolam, a designer benzodiazepine, in combination with fentanyl resulted in 10 overdose deaths and Eutylone, a synthetic stimulant, resulted in 3 overdose deaths. Para-fluorofentanyl, a fentanyl analog was present in 12 overdose deaths in 2020, between October (N=2), November (N=0), and December (N=10). Prior to 2020, para-fluorofentanyl was seen in 1 overdose death in 2018 in Connecticut.

### Comparative Overview of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths (January 2019 – December 2020)

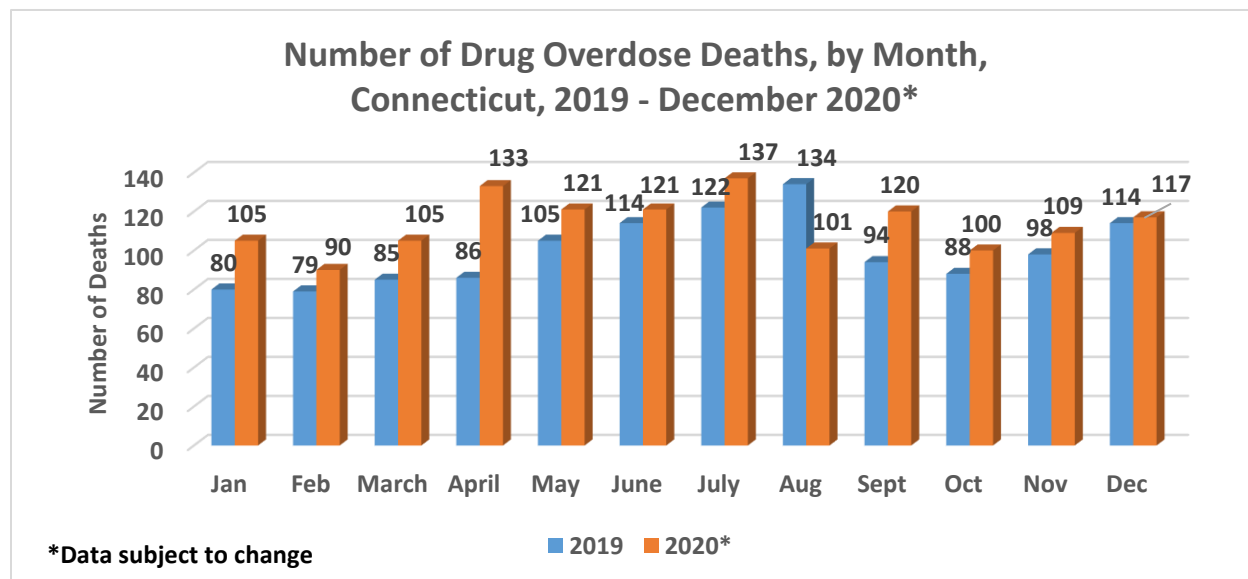
2020	2019
There were 1,359 confirmed drug overdose deaths and 78 cases pending cases. There was a 13.3% increase in drug overdose deaths by December 2020, compared to 2019.	There were 1,200 unintentional drug overdose deaths in 2019, with an increase of 18% compared to 2018.
The lethal combination of xylazine and fentanyl continues to be a problem in 2020. There were 140 deaths with xylazine and fentanyl combined. The median number of xylazine-involved deaths was 11.5.	For the first time in 2019, xylazine/fentanyl combinations were involved in 70 drug overdose deaths. The median number for xylazine-involved deaths was 7.
The average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was at 85% as of December 2020.	On average, fentanyl or fentanyl analogs were involved in 82% of the overdose deaths in 2019.
<b>Updated on 2-13-2021; Data Source: Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME), Connecticut</b>	

For substance use disorder information visit: <https://www.drugfreect.org>.

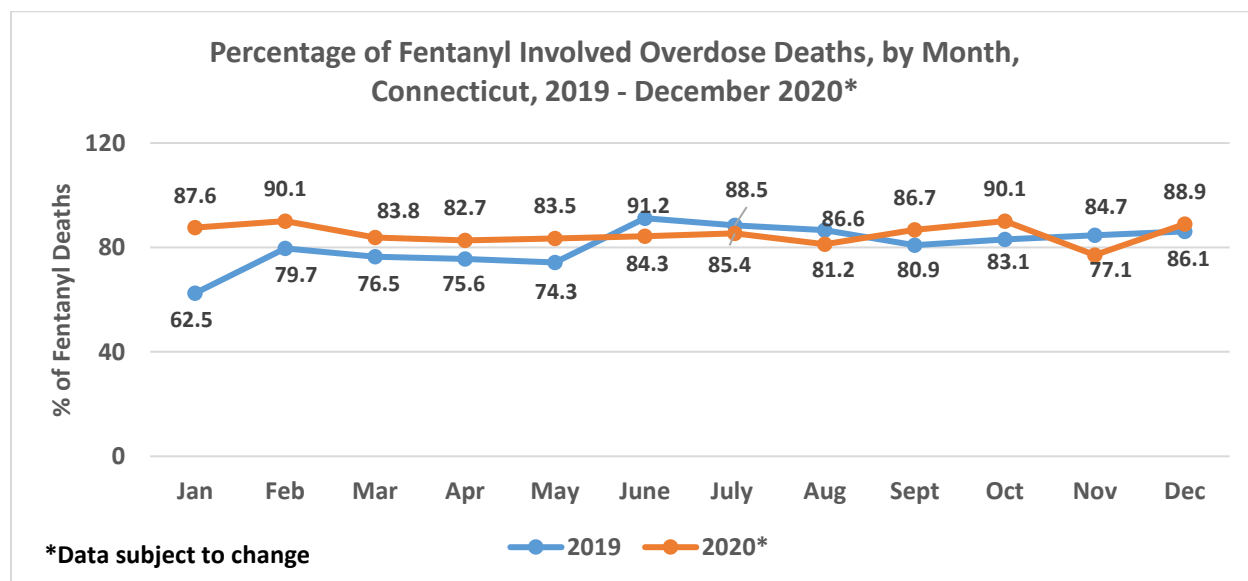
For information on the CT DPH Opioids and Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Program in the Office of Injury and Violence Prevention, visit: <https://www.ct.gov/dph/injuryprevention>

## Unintentional drug overdose deaths, by month, Connecticut, 2019 – December

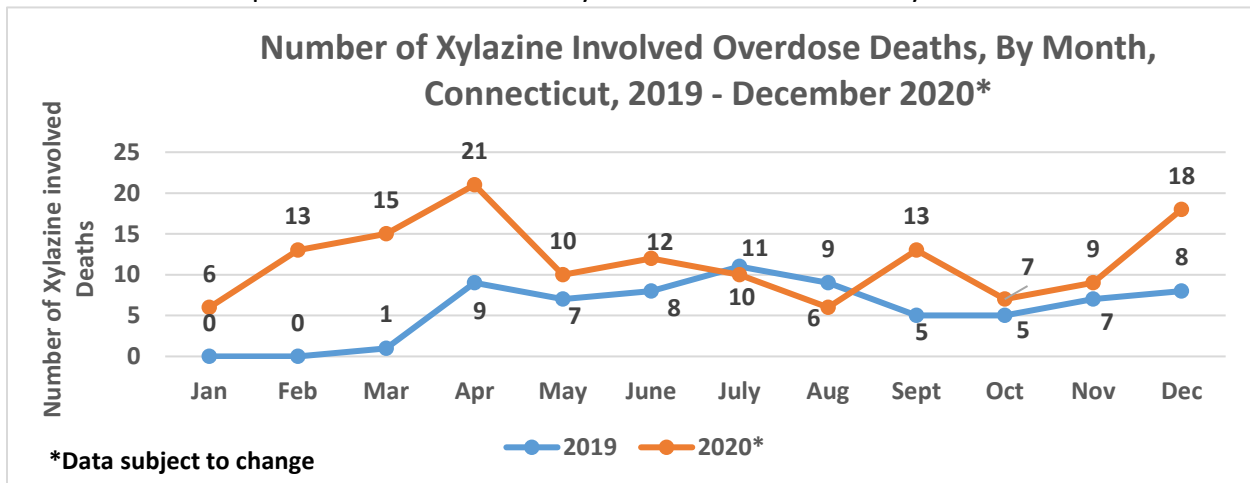
**2020:** There was a 13.3% increase in unintentional drug overdose deaths as of December 2020 in Connecticut, when compared to the same time frame of January to December of 2019. December 2020 numbers may increase as there are 40 cases pending for toxicology confirmation. The chart below represents the monthly count of confirmed drug overdose deaths.



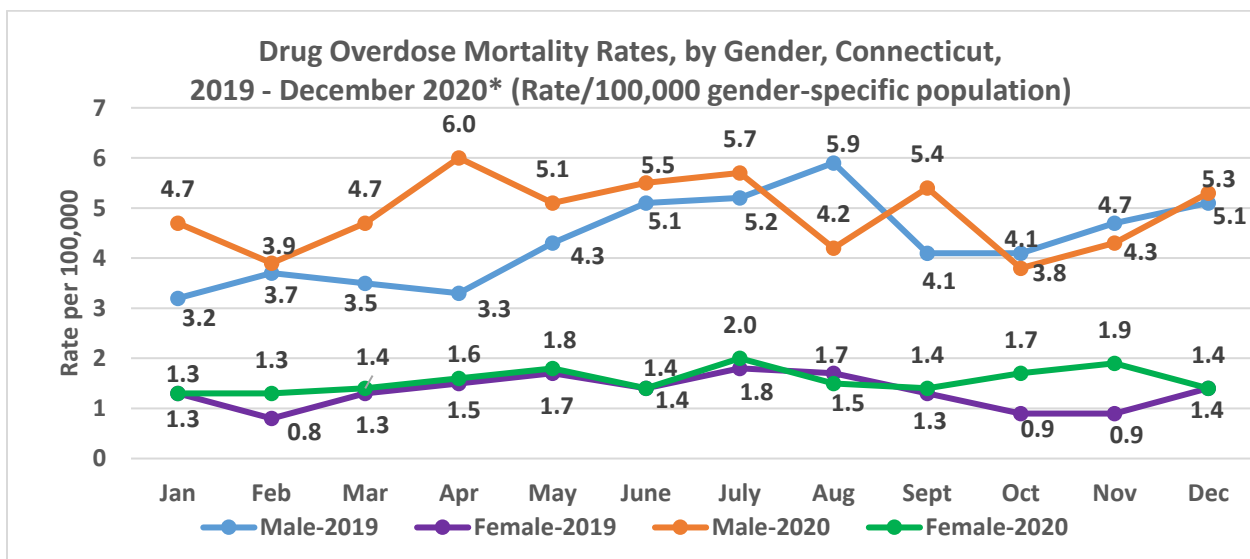
**The percentage of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths continued to be a problem in 2020:** Fentanyl-involved overdose deaths increased significantly in 2019 to 82%, compared to the previous years of 2015 to 2018. As of December 2020, the average percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths was 85%. The chart below represents the percentage of fentanyl-involved deaths by month.



**Xylazine, a veterinary tranquilizer, identified as an emerging novel substance in drug intoxication deaths in Connecticut since 2019 – December 2020:** To enhance drug effects, recreational drugs are often adulterated with other pharmacological agents such as xylazine, a veterinary sedative not intended for human use. In Connecticut, in March 2019, xylazine was identified as a novel and emerging adulterant in fatal drug intoxications when combined with fentanyl; it continues to be a problem in 2020. In 2019, there were 70 xylazine-involved deaths, and as of the middle of December 2020, there have been 140 confirmed cases. Except for one (xylazine + cocaine), all xylazine-involved deaths were combined with fentanyl. The below chart represents the number of xylazine-involved deaths by month.

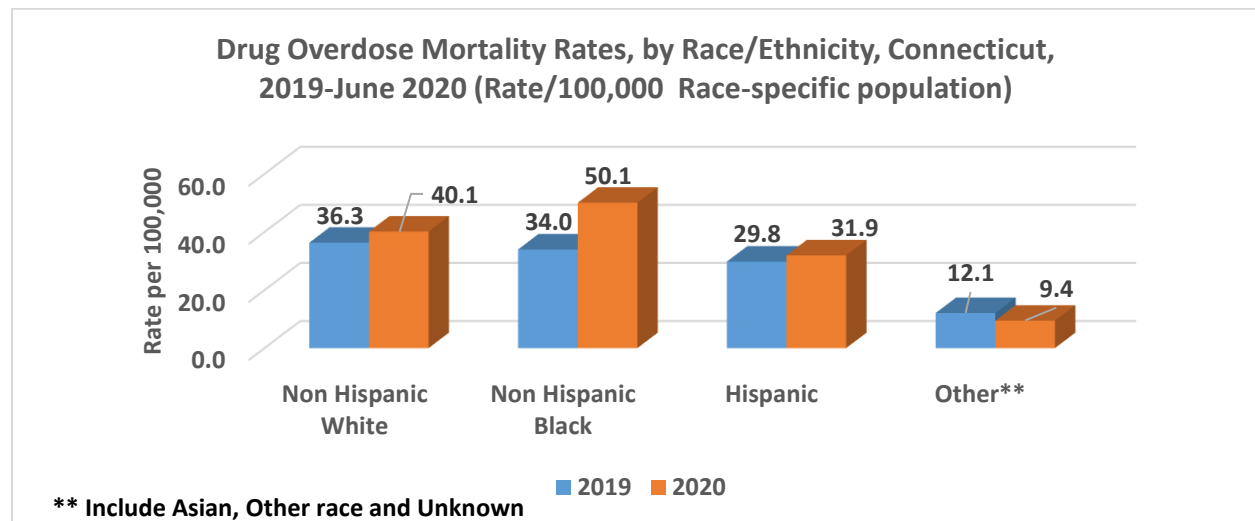


**Drug overdose death rates were higher in males compared to females in 2019 – December 2020:** Rates of unintentional drug overdose-related death were consistently higher among males when compared to females. The line graph below represents rates of unintentional drug overdose death by gender (rate per 100,000 gender-specific population) for this time period.



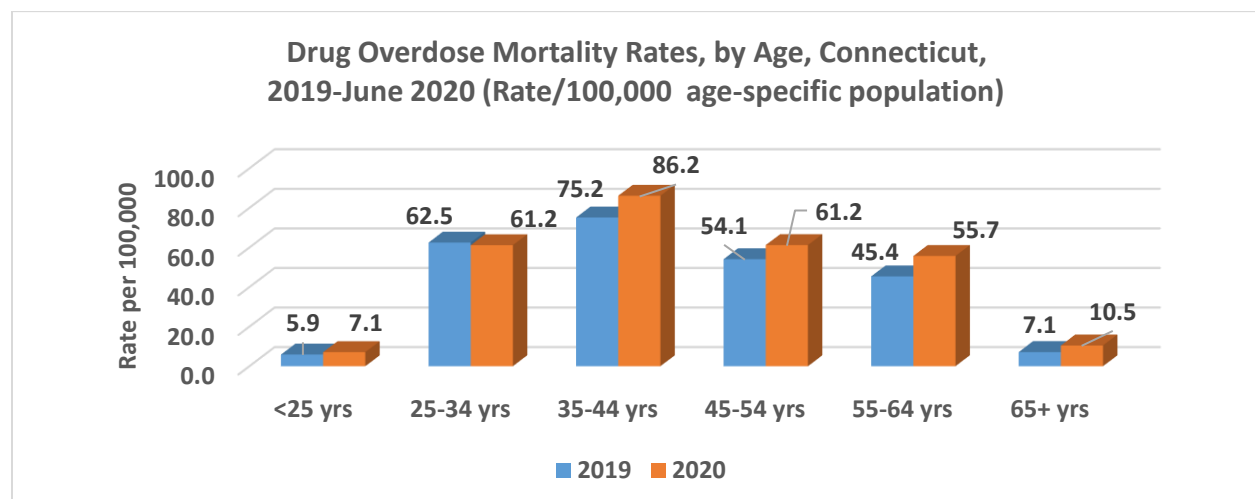
## Drug overdose death rates were higher among the non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population in Connecticut, 2019 – June 2020:

Drug overdose death rates were highest among non-Hispanic White and non-Hispanic Black populations compared to the Hispanic population during 2019 and 2020. However, in 2020, the drug overdose mortality rate substantially increased in the non-Hispanic Black population compared to the previous year. The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by race/ethnicity for year 2019 and the first half of 2020 (January – June). Rates through June are final for first half of 2020 as there are no pending cases for this time period.



## Drug overdose death rates were highest in the 35-44 year old age group in Connecticut, 2019 – June 2020:

Drug overdose death rates were highest among the 35-44 age group. The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by age, by year. Rates through June are final for first half of 2020 as there are no pending cases for this time period.



**Drug overdose death rates in Connecticut, by County, 2019 – June 2020:** The graph below represents the unintentional drug overdose mortality rate in Connecticut, by county, by year. During this period New Haven County (44.2) had the highest rate followed by Litchfield County (39.9), Middlesex County (39.4), Hartford County (39.2) and New London County (39.2). In 2020, New Haven, followed by Middlesex counties were most affected when compared to 2019. Windham County has seen a decrease in overdose death rate in 2020.

